

Message Text

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ACTION IO-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3326

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 02017

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PLAB, UR, BE

SUBJECT: ILO-SOVIETS-PLO

1. WE SAW HOUTHUYS, PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION DES SYNDICATS CHRETIENS, BELGIUM'S LARGEST TRADE UNION, SHORTLY AFTER HE RETURNED FROM THE ILO-SPONSORED CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT. HE HAD THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS:

A. THERE WAS QUITE A ROW OVER THE QUESTION OF WHETHER TO ESTABLISH PERMANENT INSTITUTIONS TO FOLLOW UP THE CONFERENCE. THE SOVIETS AND THE BRITISH WANTED TO CREATE INSTITUTIONS. THE GERMANS, THE BELGIANS, AND OTHERS WERE OPPOSED AND IN THE END PREVAILED. HOWEVER, THERE PROBABLY WOULD BE FURTHER MEETINGS ON ENVIRONMENT.

B. THE SOVIETS FAVOR INCREASED CONTACTS WITH WESTERN EUROPE AND MOST EUROPEANS FEEL THAT SUCH CONTACTS ARE DESIRABLE. THE WESTERN EUROPEAN LABOR LEADERS THINK THAT THEY CAN STEP UP CONTACTS WITH THE SOVIETS WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING WESTERN SECURITY. HOUTHUYS SAID THAT THE EUROPEANS ARE NOT AS NAIVE ABOUT THE SOVIETS AS SOME AMERICANS THINK.

C. HOUTHUYS IS WORRIED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFRONTATION ON POLITICAL ISSUES AT THE ILO CONFERENCE IN JUNE. HE SAW THE QUESTION OF OBSERVER STATUS FOR THE
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PLO AS ONE POTENTIALLY DEVISIVE ISSUE.

D. HOUTHUYS WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE QUESTION OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF REPRESENTATION ON THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE WORKERS GROUP OF THE ILO. HE SAID THAT THE SOVIETS WILL PRESS FOR GREATER REPRESENTATION FROM EASTERN EUROPE AND THAT, CONSIDERING THE DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH NUMBER OF SEATS HELD BY THE ICFTU, A FEW MORE SEATS COULD BE GIVEN TO THE WFTU (AND THE WCL) WITHOUT DOING ANY HARM.

E. HOUTHUYS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE HIGHLY DESIRABLE FOR MEANY TO COME TO WESTERN EUROPE IN THE SPRING TO MEET WITH HIS COUNTERPARTS TO WORK OUT A WESTERN STRATEGY FOR HANDLING POLITICAL ISSUES AT THE ILO CONFERENCE.

2. AS VIEWED FROM HERE, HOUTHUYS' IDEA FOR A MEETING TO DEVELOP A WESTERN STRATEGY FOR THE ILO CONFERENCE MAKES SENSE. SHOULD WE QUIETLY ENCOURAGE HIM? FIRESTONE

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